

Message Text

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ACTION EB-11

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INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRN, VE

SUBJECT: CIVAIR: CONCORDE SST VISIT TO VENEZUELA

REF: CARACAS 6612; PARIS 2466

1. AS SCHEDULED, CONCORDE ARRIVED MAIQUETIA INTERNATIONAL SEPTEMBER 18 AND LEFT SEPTEMBER 20 AFTER OVERFLYING CARACAS FOR FORT WORTH/ DALLAS.

2. ADVERTISING PRIOR AND DURING VISIT WAS INTENSIVE AND GOVERNMENT-OWNED TV STATION PUT ON SPECIAL PROGRAM. AIRCRAFT WAS SEEN BY SEVERAL THOUSAND PEOPLE AND INVITED GUESTS. INVITED PASSENGERS ON TRIP PARIS-CARACAS INCLUDED MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS; DIRECTOR CIVAIR; PRESIDENT, GENERAL MANAGER AND CHIEF PILOT OF VIASA AIRLINE; OTHER INFLUENTIAL PASSENGERS. UPON ARRIVAL, MINISTER EXPRESSED SATISFACTION WITH TRIP AND STATED THAT SST WILL BE THE FUTURE OF CIVIL AVIATION.

3. RUMORS IN CARACAS ARE THAT VIASA INTERESTED IN EVENTUAL PURCHASE OF ONE UNIT OR THAT AT LEAST IT INTENDS TO OPERATE ONE WITH EITHER BRITISH AIRWAYS OR AIR FRANCE OR BOTH. WHILE VIASA OFFICIALS SEEM EXCITED ABOUT PROSPECTS, THEY ARE NONCOMMITTAL WHEN APPROACHED DIRECTLY

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ABOUT THEIR INTENTIONS. A VIASA MARKET SURVEY SEEMS TO INDICATE THAT

AIRLINE WOULD BE ABLE TO FILL AT LEAST TWO FLIGHTS WEEKLY ON BOTH CARACAS-LONDON AND CARACAS-PARIS ROUTES. WHILE THIS IS CERTAINLY NOT SUFFICIENT TO WARRANT OUTRIGHT PURCHASE, IT MIGHT PROVIDE BASIS FOR POOL ARRANGEMENT FOR AIRCRAFT. ONE DIFFICULTY, HOWEVER, IS THAT CONCORDE'S PRESENT RANGE DOES NOT PERMIT LONDON/PARIS TO CARACAS NON-STOP FLIGHT. STILL, THIS PROMOTIONAL TRIP WITH PRE-PRODUCTION MODEL CUT NORMAL FLIGHT TIME PARIS-CARACAS IN HALF IN SPITE OF FUEL STOP IN LAS PALMAS.

4. FACT THAT CONCORDE CONSORTIUM CHOSE CARACAS AS STOP-OVER SEEMS TO INDICATE THAT CONVERSATIONS MIGHT HAVE REACHED A STAGE WHERE IT IS BELIEVED THAT SUCH AN EXPENSIVE PROMOTIONAL EFFORT MIGHT RESULT IN EVENTUAL SALE. BRITISH AIRWAYS PRESIDENT UPON LEAVING CARACAS TOLD THE PRESS THAT CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN HIS AIRLINE AND VIASA ARE BEING HELD ON CONCORDE POOL BEGINNING 1976.

5. CARACAS STOP APPARENTLY WAS ARRANGED ENTIRELY BY AIR FRANCE AND AEROSPATIALE WITH BRITISH PRESENCE LOW-KEY. THIS MIGHT BE AN INDICATION THAT THE CONCORDE LEASING PLAN OFFERED NOW BY THE RECENTLY FORMED TRANSAIRBAIL INTERNATIONAL BANKING CONSORTIUM PLAYED A ROLE IN THE EFFORT.

6. WITHIN AIRLINE CIRCLES IT WAS ALSO COMMENTED THAT DIFFICULT APPROACH TO PRESENTLY USED MAIQUETIA RUNWAY SHOWS THAT CONCORDE DOES NOT REQUIRE SPECIAL FACILITIES. LOW NOISE LEVEL ON APPROACH, LANDING AND TAXIING WAS ALSO FAVORABLY MENTIONED.

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